



BELLE HAVEN MARINA PUBLIC SCOPING UPDATE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE GEORGE WASHINGTON MEMORIAL PARKWAY

Volume II

August 2001

Dear Friends,

We held two public scoping open houses on May 1 and 2, 2001 to explain the National Park Service planning process and to collect comments from the public on eight potential alternatives for providing access to the Potomac River. The alternatives considered a complete range of options from expanded visitor service facilities to no action. Park staff counted 232 members of the public in attendance at the open houses with 141 of those in attendance providing comments during the open house. By the end of the comment period on June 4, we received a total of 336 comments from the public, including 297 e-mails. The goal of public scoping is to identify new issues and help determine alternatives to analyze in the Environmental Assessment (EA). Public Scoping is a beginning step in the planning process and allows for early involvement of the interested and affected public. Since the scoping process is a fact finding rather than a voting process, this newsletter will summarize substantive issues revealed through public scoping rather than provide tallies of the results. The Friends of Belle Haven Marina proposed a new alternative during the scoping process described on page 3. We are in the process of developing the alternatives which will be analyzed in the EA based on these public comments.

George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) is pursuing all reasonable alternatives to avoid the interruption of visitor services during this planning process. We will request that the National Park Service Director exercise the authority to continue marina operations under a temporary contract. This authority is permitted under section 403 of the National Park Service Concessions Management Act of 1998, Pub. L. No. 105-391. The NPS is continuing to develop the Operating Plan and associated EA that will determine the future services to be offered on the Belle Haven peninsula. We are also exploring avenues where we would include an invitation for proposals which would include an assortment of boating activities and facilities at no cost to the Federal Government. We propose to offer this option using the maximum contract term subject to approval of the Secretary of Interior.

In order to gather data needed to complete the EA we will be consulting with various experts. The Virginia State Department of Conservation and Recreation's Soil Erosion Advisory Service will be conducting an assessment of existing conditions. The NPS' Concession Program Center will be conducting an audit looking at environmental liability, regulation compliance, and concession contract requirements. Both services come at no cost to the concessioner or the NPS. The timeline for the completion of the EA relies on the collection and analysis of data consultants and may have to be adjusted as needed. We will provide a more detailed timeline for the EA as more information becomes available.

Thank you for your participation and we look forward to working with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Audrey F. Cathoun
Superintendent, George Washington Memorial Parkway

PROJECTED PLANNING TIMELINE

Shoreline Erosion Assessment VA State DCR	Summer 2001
NPS Concession Program Center audit	Summer 2001
Solicit consultant to complete technical evaluation and modification of the proposed alternatives	award Fall 2001
Draft temporary concession contract submitted for Director's approval	Fall 2001

IN ADDITION TO MORE THAN 200 PRIVATE CITIZENS, THE FOLLOWING GROUPS
IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES THROUGH PUBLIC SCOPING

- Alexandria Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America
- Ballston-Virginia Square Civic Association
- Belle Haven Condominium Unit Owners Association
- Chesapeake Paddlers Association
- Fairfax County Wetlands Board
- Friends of Belle Haven Marina
- Friends of Dyke Marsh
- Northern Virginia Chapter of Trout Unlimited
- Occoquan River Maritime Association
- Stratford Landing Citizens Association

GENERAL COMMENTS RECEIVED FROM THE PUBLIC

Access to the River

- Too few public launch areas.
- The Potomac is one of the finest river fisheries in the Nation.

Location

- The marina is walking distance for a large number of people.
- It is the only facility for motor boats on Virginia side between National Airport (Gravelly Point) and Pohick Bay.
- Leesylvania is 20 miles south but there is no wet slip storage only a boat ramp.
- River access for non-motorized boats on the Virginia side of the Potomac, between National Airport and Mt. Vernon is limited.
- The distance to travel to another marina would require trailering a boat through rush hour traffic through Old Town to Roaches Run, this would impact Old Town residents.
- Boaters and renters would be displaced and move North causing more congestion on a narrower section of the river.
- Other boating options are overcrowded and too far away.
- It is the only sailing school in the area.
- Closing would require more fuel and time to travel to get to another marina and more fuel once on the water to get to local fishing spots.
- In a few years motor boat owners will be able to cross the Woodrow Wilson bridge to Port America.
- Belle Haven does not ice over in the winter unlike Gravelly Point.
- Access to public hunting areas (South of Woodrow Wilson Bridge) need motor boat launch.
- Only fire and rescue access to Potomac between 14th street bridge and Fort Belvoir.

Belle Haven Marina

- There is affordable sailboat rental for those who can not afford to own a boat.
- There are affordable boat slips.
- Closing Belle Haven will put additional stress on other marinas in the area.
- Open land to public use fully, no motor boats and no limited space rentals.
- Belle Haven is the only facility that combines sail, power, canoe and kayak with a sailing school and boat rental operation in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Dyke Marsh

- Jet skis should be prohibited from use in the Belle Haven and Dyke Marsh area.
- No wake region within the marsh area to reduce wave impact.
- Boats must be winched on to trailers, not driven, to mitigate noise and reduce environmental impacts.
- There are motorboat impacts on Dyke Marsh.
- There is illegal use of boats within Dyke Marsh.
- No motorized boats should be allowed in the Dyke Marsh Preserve and this rule should be strictly enforced.
- Many "Notice" signs marking the boundary of Dyke Marsh have been removed.
- Close Belle Haven Marina and convert the acreage to Dyke Marsh.
- Dry storage conserves dock space and protects the boats from fouling the water and protects the environment from fuel leaking.
- Maintaining access to the marsh by boat is essential for monitoring wildlife.
- Need to clarify Dyke Marsh legislation vs. GWMP legislation.
- Provide environmental education programs at the marina, teach respect for nature and the need to protect the resources at Dyke Marsh.

PUBLIC COMMENTS RELATED TO PLANNING A NEW FACILITY

Belle Haven Picnic Area (location considered in Scoping)

- Belle Haven picnic area waterfront is too shallow.
- Expand the marina to the north with some dredging and open 500 to 600 slips making it economically feasible
- Belle Haven Picnic Area is in the middle of a large mud flat and gets choked with hydrilla and milfoil in the summer and would require major dredging.
- In no case should any part of the Belle Haven Picnic Area be sacrificed to sun-baked asphalt and boat trailers.

Other Marina Examples

- Use state and county parks as examples (Leesylvania & Pohick)
- A visitor center like the one at Huntley Meadows would be a nice facility for providing educational programs
- Barren Island Marina in Gateway National Recreation area in Brooklyn, NY is an example of a marina concession that works.

Boat Storage

- Eliminate wet slips on the west of the peninsula, as water is so shallow as to require dredging.
- Removal of dry storage will help clear congestion.
- Increase wet storage to accommodate the most number of boats.
- Refurbish existing 69 wet slips do not expand
- Area community associations passed bylaws banning the storage of boats.
- Increase parking by reducing dry storage at the entrance
- If the slips are eliminated there will be long lines for launching.
- The revamping of slips will provide increased boat storage and safety.
- Move dry storage to Fort Hunt.
- 12 trailer parking spaces or none at all.

- Keep Belle Haven as a sailing school only.
- Sailboat rental should be included.
- Consider installing 100-foot jetty along north side of boat ramp to stop siltation and provide a wind break.
- Do not remove motorized watercraft from the marina, there will be negative impacts on the concessioner.
- The scoping does not include preservation of the existing facility.
- There is a need for an accessible fishing dock.
- Provide environmental education programs at the marina.
- Provide access to river for physically impaired visitors.
- Create cartop launch at Riverside Park.
- Better parking and dock improvement is needed.
- Providing access to the river is meaningless without adequate trailer and vehicle parking.
- Parking for fishing, sailing, or recreational use should be separated from picnic area; do not enlarge the picnic area.
- Bring the existing facility into compliance with health and safety requirements and forgo any plans that would eliminate or enlarge the marina.
- Keep ramp to one lane.
- A marina needs good separation of motorized and non-motorized boat launching.
- Launching kayaks and other small boats is best when done from a natural sand beach or other surface that does not scratch the boat or paddles.
- Reasons to close a marina would be cost vs. benefit and dangerous conditions.
- Powerboats and non-motorized craft do not mix well in launch areas or on the water.
- What makes a facility a marina?

NEW ALTERNATIVE PROPOSED BY THE FRIENDS OF BELLE HAVEN

Two lane, motorized ramp	Yes
Vehicle parking spaces	81
<u>Concession Services</u>	
Dry land storage spaces	15
Dry rack storage spaces	30
Wet slip spaces	91
Sailing School	Yes
Canoe and kayak rental	Yes
<u>Visitor Use</u>	
Canoeing and kayaking	Yes
Sailing	Yes
Motor Boating	Yes
Shoreline fishing	No

This alternative would move all existing dry storage area to the west side of the peninsula between the school dock and the office. The remaining space on the peninsula would become vehicle parking. All wet slips on the west and south side of the peninsula would be eliminated, but the mooring field used for sailboats only would be maintained. Three new docks on the east side of the peninsula would be constructed with a capacity for 30 slips each.

PUBLIC COMMENTS RELATED TO FUNDING MARINA REPAIRS

- The Pittman-Robertson Act as a funding source.
- The Wallop-Breaux Act as a funding source.
- Virginia State Fishing license fees set aside for navigable waters.
- Any cost analysis has to include the cost of removing the marina.
- Belle Haven Community can fundraise for the marina.
- Reduce the number of wet storage allowing cost reduction for shore improvement needs.
- Boat U.S. magazine article Congress appropriated money for building and upgrading public boating access and facilities in parks.
- Feasibility Study is six years old and does not reflect current market.
- Current users do not want a "yacht" club.
- Use Woodrow Wilson Bridge mitigation as a funding source.
- Use revenue from concession fees to cover the cost of repair work.
- Electrical service for boaters is extravagant.
- Boat owners could help raise the funds to keep the marina open.
- Give the concessioner a long-term contract.
- Find out if the private sector believes the marina to be feasible.
- The NPS could install parking meters to help defray the costs of constructing such a facility.
- Allow the marina to continue to operate while the NPS makes plans and determines funding sources.
- Facilities do not have to be goldplated.

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